Professor Stephen Belcher appointed as new Met Office Chief Scientist

Nov 9, 2016 3:43 PM

Professor Stephen Belcher has been appointed the new Met Office Chief Scientist as Professor Dame Julia Slingo DBE FRS retires after a long and distinguished career in climate modelling and research.

As Chief Scientist, Stephen will be responsible for leading the 600 Met Office research staff to ensure delivery of our science strategy. This aims to deliver science with impact and maximise the benefit to society of our weather and climate expertise.

The role is also a key part of making the most of the UK Government's investment in Met Office high performance computing and ensuring that Met Office science plays its role in underpinning the UK's world class research into weather and climate science.

As Chief Scientist, Stephen will work with the Director of Science Andy Brown, directing and managing Met Office scientific research and development and ensuring that the brightest talent comes to work at the Met Office.

Speaking about his new role, Professor Belcher said:

"Julia, and her predecessors in the role, have all been such passionate ambassadors of the world-leading science we do here at the Met Office.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to follow in their footsteps and maintain this great tradition.

"I am looking forward to nurturing the scientific excellence in Met Office Science and integrating that excellence into the UK's broader world-leading weather and climate science to develop services for the maximum benefit to society."

After a career in fundamental atmospheric and ocean research at the University of Reading, Professor Belcher joined the Met Office in 2012 when he was appointed Director of the Met Office Hadley Centre.

Retiring Chief Scientist, Julia Slingo, said:

"I am delighted that Stephen has agreed to be the next Chief Scientist. He has the depth and breadth of experience that is needed for this demanding role.

"I have every confidence that under Stephen's leadership we will continue to be the world-leading force in weather and climate science that we are today."

Met Office Chief Executive, Rob Varley, said:

"I am delighted to welcome Stephen to the role; I know he will do a fantastic job. It is also a time to thank Julia for her hard work and dedication over her eight years as Chief Scientist. I wish her all the best for her well earned retirement."

Government Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Mark Walport said:

"The wealth of experience that Stephen Belcher brings to the role will ensure that the Met Office continues to stay at the forefront of research into weather and climate science. He will be a valuable addition to the network of Chief Scientific Advisers and I look forward to working with him.

"I would also like to thank Julia for the exceptional job she has done over the last eight years and I wish her every success in the future."

About Julia

Professor Dame Julia Slingo DBE FRS has been the Met Office Chief Scientist since 2009 after originally working at the Met Office for 8 years from 1972 as a Senior Scientist. After working at the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in the USA and the University of Reading, Professor Dame Julia returned to lead research and represent the Met Office on weather and climate science across government.

Julia leaves a strong legacy at the Met Office, where she will particularly be remembered for her inspirational leadership, breaking down the barriers between weather and climate and delivering a more seamless approach to science, modelling and prediction. Julia was also a core part of making the case for a £97m investment in the supercomputer to unlock the potential of weather and climate science. She has been a relentless advocate for placing Met Office Science firmly within the UK research base as a critical national science capability.

About Stephen

Professor Stephen Belcher obtained his PhD in fluid dynamics from the University of Cambridge in 1990 and has subsequently published over 100 peer-reviewed papers on a wide variety of topics in atmospheric and oceanic turbulence. In 2002 Stephen received the Rosenstiel Award for Oceanography for outstanding research in oceanographic science.

Stephen has led the evolution of the Met Office Hadley Centre to focus on climate science and services: it is time for climate science to move out of the seminar room of academic science and into a practicable service realm, motivated by the need to provide governments, industry and society with actionable advice, i.e. 'climate services'. He was a driving force behind the initiation of the Climate Science for Service Partnership for China (CSSP China), supported by the Newton Fund, in which scientists from both China and the UK are now working together to develop fundamental climate science and climate services.

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